ANOTHER CHALLENGE FOR AFRICA: ETHNIC STABILITY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

ANOTHER CHALLENGE FOR AFRICA: ETHNIC STABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Ethnicity is a cultural, deep-seated personal matter to the African people. Still, ethnicity is a key foundational challenge for Africa to adequately address, assuage and improve, given the right focus and assistance. Ethnicity can combine with other factors of instability such as poverty, disease, corruption, poor governance and weak institutions to stunt the forward progress of African governments in tackling these challenges. That reality leads to the intention of this paper—to examine the role that ethnicity plays in African social structures and in formal African governance. To that end, this paper will recommend ways to help mitigate unrest, instability and conflict associated with ethnicity and ethnic intolerance to strengthen regional stability in Africa in support of U.S. national interests.

ANOTHER CHALLENGE FOR AFRICA: ETHNIC STABILITY

> The history of humankind is marked by constant struggle for existence, or conflict. Within states or between them, conflicts have always been principal driving forces for human evolution, contributing to the development of peoples' thoughts, their ideas on reality, and their perception of the contemporary world.[1]

Africa is a unique and commanding continent—the second largest in both area (square miles) and population of the seven world continents[2]—comprised of 53 independent states, each with its own governance, history, geography, political system, economics, demographics, culture, and languages. From a U.S. perspective, most know of Africa from news reports about disturbing humanitarian issues and crises: poverty, hunger, unemployment, economic imbalances, limited education, HIV/AIDS and malaria epidemics and associated orphan populations, soaring birth rates and infant mortality, and lacking infrastructure and social services and civil unrest.

These problems, especially as compounded, can set the foundation of an unstable or failing state that does not provide the necessary and appropriate care, services, and opportunity for its citizens. Another contributing factor to instability is ethnicity. Ethnicity and ethnic-based conflict is but one of the myriad of challenges facing African countries. Issues tied to ethnicity are not just limited to the weakest of African states, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo or Somalia.[3] These issues also occur in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya, two of the more progressive countries in Africa. Ethnicity, as an issue, can combine with other factors contributing to instability, factors such as poverty, disease, corruption, poor governance, and weak

institutions to stunt the forward progress of African governments in tackling these challenges.[4]

Ethnicity is a cultural, deep-seated personal matter to the African people. Yet, ethnicity is also a key foundational challenge for Africa to adequately address, assuage and improve, given the right focus and assistance. That reality leads to the intention of this paper—to examine the role that ethnicity plays in African social structures and in formal African governance, and to recommend ways to help mitigate unrest, instability and conflict associated with ethnicity and ethnic intolerance to leverage outside assistance to help strengthen regional stability in Africa in support of U.S. national interests.

Ethnicity

For the purpose of this paper, ethnicity is the common trait shared by all ethnic groups—a vague, but strongly held sense of shared origin that creates "enduring values, cultures or beliefs."[5] Essentially, ethnicity is based on "frustratingly ill-defined ascriptive traits that are emotionally and politically powerful to those who claim them."[6] Language and religion alone do not define ethnicity. Rather, ethnicity refers to a shared cultural identity, involving similar practices, initiatives, beliefs, and linguistic features passed from one generation to another.[7] Although the terms tribe and ethnicity are at times used interchangeably as if they were the same, they are not. According to the Nigerian scholar J.F. Ajayi, tribe and tribalism were the predecessors of the concept of ethnicity and their conception began in the colonial state.[8] The diversity of Africans across religions, tribal groups, and ethnicities and cultures, is one of the many facets of Africa that set it apart from other nations. Its persistent challenges, to include ethnic conflict, are also tied to its diversity. Ethnic conflict has "emerged as one of the most

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pressing issues since the termination of the Cold War."[9] As such, the interactions between ethnic identity and civic nationalism are key factors in state stability.[10]

U.S. National Interests in Africa

Africa is linked to the U.S. historically, economically, culturally, and politically.[11] The continent, rife with natural resources, is strategically important to the world from economic and market standpoints with global interest in Africa's natural resources that include diamonds, oil, and gold. Africa's increasing importance to the United States is certain; therefore, its security and stability are critical to U.S. interests[12] just as they are to African national interests, as indentified in the African Union (AU) Charter.[13] The United States has recognized the geo-strategic importance of Africa to the United States and other world leaders and economic powers like China. As noted in the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS), U.S. national interests include a secure and stable Africa.[14] The U.S. position on Africa is articulated in our policy objectives that include: building capacity in Africa; consolidating democratic transitions; bolstering fragile states; strengthening regional and sub-regional organizations; strengthening regional security; stimulating Africa's economic development and growth; and providing humanitarian and development assistance.[15]

Although the predominant U.S. interest in Africa may be open market access in a free market economy,[16] the state of Africa and its people also matter. While the bountiful natural resources in Africa provoke interest worldwide, many populations of African countries are suffering from chronic issues that yield and support instability challenges that include ethnicity. Instability challenges often become security challenges, because instability not managed well could result in increased security risk to the U.S. national interests that extend to Africa.[17]

In order to achieve the U.S. national interests, it is, therefore, imperative that we continue to learn to understand Africa, its people, its culture, as well as the issues affecting African nations. Africa has the highest number of ethnic groups and tribes in the world, hence the highest number of ethnic conflicts and instability.[18] For that reason, this situation mandates the understanding of the linkage of ethnicity to the potential for instability.

Ethnicity and Its Linkage to Instability

During the Cold War era, class and economic divisions largely shaped political conflicts within many societies, overshadowing the flashpoints created by ethnicity and nationalism. Since the 1980s, conflicts couched in ethnic divisions, mostly within existing political systems, have become more common, and now dominate the mobilization of political interests within many states.[19] Ethnic groups routinely garner attention, either positive or negative, to meet the political objectives of those in power.

Successfully integrating diverse groups of citizens within a common national identity is one of the greatest challenges of modern international politics and state building. In previous eras, the main fault lines dividing citizens in many parts of the world revolved around social class. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union ethnic conflicts have again gained prominence. The Cold War decades limited the potential for such conflicts, although some of the struggles associated with the decolonization movements provided indications of the potential for ethnicity to serve as a primary flashpoint for violence and political hatred in Africa.[20]

Ethnic conflicts have become an increasingly salient destabilizing force. Virtually all of the other major issues that challenge Africa nations--poverty, disease, mortality,

education, economics, agriculture, geography, infrastructure, trade, security, governance and politics--impact the ethnicity issues and create impetus for conflicts. A number of causes that support and sustain instability in Africa also give rise to internal state-to-state and cross-border country conflicts. Several of the most important factors relating to ethnicity include geography, colonialism, corruption, and political practices. [21]

Geography

Africa's current geography and its colonial past are inextricably intermingled. Geography is one of the most fundamental causes behind political power, because it is an unchanging resource, particularly for states. In Africa though, because geography is a foundation of power for a state, political elites often fight and succumb to corruption over the spoils of the land, only exacerbating the prevailing instability.[22]

The colonization of African countries occurred in what became known as the *Scramble for Africa.*[23] At the Berlin Conference (1884–1885), the colonizing powers of Europe divided the African continent into "ruling jurisdictions."[24] The colonial elites of the time did not take into account traditional tribal boundaries, resulting in immediate conflict between ethnic groups. [25] By splitting family and ethnic groups and escalating conflict over property ownership and land entitlements, the colonial division of Africa disrupted the people and their social and economic lives. The new state borders that divided preexisting ethnic communities yielded an unnatural situation for both the people and the continent.[26] Interestingly though, the colonial borders formed in the late 1800s have remained static through the years, extending this foundation of conflict. [27] Colonialism created a distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous, between

ethnicity and race and affected the balance of power, the state of power, and effectively the rule of law state in the prevailing systems.[28]

Clearly, colonial policies also had a negative impact on "independent" Africa, post-independence from their colonial masters, chiefly Great Britain and France, after 1960. Whereas the modern state in Europe suppressed cultural diversity, the modern state outside Europe tended to affirm cultural differences. Britain, for example, implemented a policy of "divide and rule" in order to achieve administrative efficiencies, a practice that positioned one ethnic group against another. From the point of view of nineteenth-century colonialism, or *direct rule* colonialism, it was "anathema for the colonial power to create and enforce separate legal systems on different sections of its population: civil law for all the races, and separate sets of customary laws for each ethnic group."[29] Many African countries post-independence failed to grasp the real meaning of democracy, resulting in *sit-tight* rules and dictatorships.[30] The end result is a lack of cultural integrity and social cohesion centered around ethnicity that still remains in many cases.[31]

For example, from 1948 to 1993, the civil rights of 'non-white' inhabitants of South Africa were limited and whites maintained minority rule. Apartheid was a system of legal racial segregation enforced by governing political parties in South Africa. The government of South Africa also practiced the same discriminatory policies by depriving black residents of their citizenship. They were instead assigned to tribal based homelands. The government also segregated education, medical care, and other public services, providing inferior services for blacks. The repression of apartheid understandably sparked significant internal resistance and violent conflicts in South

Africa. In response, the state executed increasing repression and state-sponsored violence.[32]

The conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda is a prime, albeit dreadful, example of this. Rwanda's population is basically comprised of two ethnic groups: the Hutu (Bantu) comprise 84 percent of the population, and the Tutsi (Hamitic) comprise 15 percent.[33] Their ethnic differences across colonial boundaries escalated into civil war at independence with the ethnic majority Hutus killing thousands of Tutsis, causing their exile. Their grown children, in turn, rallied to their cause in 1990 to start a four-year civil war, resulting by 1994 in the Tutsi defeat of the Hutu and the genocide of 800 thousand Tutsi and two million refugee Hutus spread across four neighboring countries.[34] Genocide simply does not occur between neighbors who are legitimate, no matter what other differences they may have. Genocide occurs only against those considered illegitimate, and whose attempt at power is considered an "alien usurpation."[35]

This colonial legacy of purism in some cases reflects a "not born here" attitude from generations past. "Ethnic nationalism" is based on common descent, purity of race, sovereignty, language and culture and declaration of an exclusive zone for 'us' and not 'them'. This type of "tribalism" is very dangerous, as it is exclusivist and isolationist. Although there was world outrage over the genocide in Rwanda, this type of negative nationalism has since been repeated in Yugoslavia and Bosnia.[36] African citizenship requirements post-independence often reflect this "not from this land" connotation. This extends to the treatment of citizenship for other Africans as well, in that ethnicity adds to the argument over who belongs, or does not, by creating quiet and

not so quiet forms of apartheid. Sadly, the challenges of ethnicity in many African

states resemble those that occurred under apartheid. As shown in the respective legal

codes of Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Kenya, ethnicity is the new 21st Century apartheid.[37]

Corruption

New post-colonial leaders turned out to be increasingly authoritarian and

corrupt.[38] Because very little government money was spent for needed infrastructure

development, the resulting poverty of the populace and their inability to affect their

leaders democratically created increasing resentment and dissent. Sustained by

persistent poverty and political instability, corruption still poses serious challenges to

development in Africa and threatens the stability and security of its society. It

undermines institutions and value of democracy, ethical values and justice, and

jeopardizes sustainable development. Corruption affects the effectiveness of state

institutions and hinders the state's capacity to provide public goods such as health,

education, and security. Furthermore, corruption increases grievances and

incompatible demands for political change through popular support for violent political

change.[39] Between 1963 and 2004, West Africa countries experienced 44 successful

coup d'état, 43 bloody failed coup attempts, 82 reported coup plots and many horrific

civil wars.[40]

Economic and government corruption has devastated African societies and

helped to impoverish millions. African leaders and civil servants pilfer approximately

$148 billion from the continent every year, according to the African Union. Corruption

and mismanagement of public resources by government officials were the cause of

frequent rebel activities in Liberia and Sierra Leone.[41] Of the top 16 countries on the

2006 Forbes List of Most Corrupt Nations, nine were from Africa. Global Financial

Integrity (GFI), a U.S. based anti-corruption group, reported that the amount of money misappropriated from Africa far exceeds the official development assistance provided to African countries.[42] Resource control is the struggle about access to and control over important resources such as oil, diamond, gold, water, and grazing and productive land. Inequity in the distribution, use, needs, desires and consequences of resources management have been sources of insecurity and instability in Africa.[43] The problem is not about scarce resources, although there is that connection for some. It is about having access to resources.[44]

Ethnicity can also play a role in how the distribution of stolen resources of the state can lead to instability and create grievances within a society. For example, subsequent to the discovery of oil in Nigeria about 50 years ago, corresponding oil sales netted over $400 billion. Yet, over 70 percent of Nigerians live in abject poverty. The country has little to show for its "petro-dollars except poverty, corruption, and recently violence and anarchy."[45] Elites and government leaders often share the wealth from oil reserves, but not with the populace of the state or for infrastructure and state services.

Corruption, combined with the neglect by the oil producers of the region, has created increasing tensions within Nigeria. In the 1990s for example, continuing poverty and environmental destruction forced the people of Ogoniland to demand that Nigerian government develop the oil rich areas to make them suitable for farming. The government rebuffed the Ogoni requests, and had eight of their activists executed.[46] Unfortunately, that situation has changed little over the years, with continued uprisings, often violent and involving bloodshed, against the government and the oil companies— with no positive outcome.[47] Continued government corruption, combined with the

neglect of the social needs of oil producing regions, has created increasing tensions within Nigeria that are manifesting themselves along ethnic lines.

In a factionalized society, like that of Nigeria, ethnicity is a standout issue for the social classes regarding inclusion. More often than not, politicians use ethnicity to convince their followers that the basis of marginalization defends their ethnic interests. [48] In most African countries, political parties form along ethnic lines, creating a lasting threat to stability on the continent. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has over 250 ethnic groups within its borders that include the most populous and politically influential: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, and Tiv 2.5%. While English is the official language, other common languages in Nigeria include Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo), Fulani, and over 500 additional indigenous languages. [49]

In theory there is nothing wrong with this number of ethnic groups in one location given they predate the country. It only becomes an issue when politicians and other leaders invoke "ethnic action and nationalism", for ulterior motives to achieve political and economic objectives. That is when conflict begins in a bitter and endless cycle. [50] The corresponding number of conflicts within these groups serves to perpetuate ethnic instability. In recent years, ethnically motivated civil uprisings in "communal clashes" have occurred between each of the primary groups against regional minority ethnicities: Berom and Hausa-Fulani in Jos, Tiv and Jukun; Hausa and Yoruba in Lagos; and Yoruba and Ijaw, and Ijaw and Itsekiri and Urhobo. The relationship between ethnicity and conflict in Africa has become the standard instead of social harmony, diversity and development. [51]

<u>Political Practice</u>

Beyond major conflicts in Africa over the territorial integrity of states such as Sudan and Somalia, several recent African conflicts sparked by grievances over bad governance and exclusionary political practices occurred. Given the "lack of overall national identity within African states, political elites exploit ethnicity lines to mobilize voters."[52] In many cases, flawed or failed elections have precipitated political disputes or aggravated simmering tensions into conflict. Political elites have to make ethnicity a salient political factor for it to gain traction as a direct cause of conflict. In recent years, violent conflicts have ensued from the competition for political power in Africa as demonstrated by dramatic election crises in Ethiopia and Kenya in 2008. While the magnitude of ethnic hostilities in all cases may not escalate to armed conflict or civil war, invariably loss on some level occurs to lives, property and societal norms. Progressively more polarized, political groups and the correspondingly affected ethnic relationships, cause stalled or impeded democratization efforts.[53]

Often instability issues are a result of ulterior motives by politicians and community leaders to achieve their political and economic objectives. Now typical for Africa, where political conflicts exist, so too do ethnicity challenges. Ethnicity often takes the form of political mobilization by political elites, particularly by ineffective or unsuccessful politicians lacking a credible agenda for their electorate.[54] The ensuing political mobilization ultimately stifles the opportunity for good governance and democratic institution building within the African nations. Notably, this is when ethnicity poses the most serious threat to those societies and is most dangerous to peace and stability challenges. As demonstrated in Rwanda, Sudan, Kenya and Nigeria, the coupling of governance and ethnicity may result in some degree of political violence,

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particularly when rival community groups or competing political party tensions escalate

during elections or other sensitive community events.[55]

Many politicians across Africa continue to use ethnicity to promote themselves

and inflict maximum political damage on their opponents. In Cote d'Ivoire, presidential

aspirant and former Prime Minister Alassane Quattara was barred from contesting an

election, simply on the basis that his parents hailed from Burkina Faso, a neighboring

country.[56] Cote d'Ivoire is a very specific example of the defacto 'apartheid' created by

the injection of ethnicity into politics. Politicized ethnicity issues provide a fertile

environment for inter-ethnic conflict, competing one interest group against another

rather than providing equal opportunities and the common right to public good.[57]

Ethnicity, as it affects political practice, also appears as a factor in the

governance of African states. For example, in Nigeria, indices of poor governance such

as corruption, political repression, and "ethnic sectarianism" are rampant. Nigerian

leaders have ignored the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution and imposed

procedures that serve selfish political interests.[58] While the format of their constitution

parallels the U.S. Constitution and the content appears all-inclusive, it does not apply to

all equitably within the country. Ethnic tensions and class structure prevail, and

authoritarian presidents take advantage of the ethnic disparities to retain power and

position. It is insufficient to have a model constitution without proper enforcement or

execution that should result from good governance and institution building. Poor

governance in Nigeria, in over 50 years of independence, has resulted in lacking

infrastructure, absence of healthcare, inadequate transportation systems and deplorable

road conditions, high unemployment; and high crime rates. On its face, the Nigerian

Constitution provides for fair and equitable treatment of all citizens and ethnicities, although not yet fully realized in practice.[59] The outline of an institutional framework is a start, albeit inadequate, as shown by the sustained instability in that nation since its independence in 1960.

The media also plays a powerful role in African politics, given its use in the political manipulation of ethnic tensions. The media functions as an essential part of the check-and-balance system created by national constitutions.[60] The mass media is a source of socialization and identity in the public sphere and plays a significant role in "mediating the relationship between the individual, groups and society."[61] In ethnically charged situations, the media can promote exclusivity versus inclusiveness or precipitate conflict by disseminating messages of intolerance or misinformation to control public sentiment.[62]

In March of 1992, *Radio Rwanda*, a government-owned station promoted the killing of ethnic Tutsi in Bugesera, Rwanda. Similarly, the extremist newspaper, *Kangura*, often noted "hysterical hatred of Tutsi and any Hutu who expressed the desire for change, freedom and democratic openness."[63] The perceived role of media in inciting these killings illustrates the influence of ethnic biases in society. The media excess regarding the Rwandan genocide also demonstrates the corresponding disregard of ethical and ethnic considerations.[64] Many Nigerian newspapers, such as the *Nigerian Tribune*, have obvious ethnic biases. They report in the name of freedom of the press, yet they encourage friction among groups.[65]

Effect of Ethnicity on the African State of Conflict

The inter-linkage of ethnicity and instability is the intensification of several of the

factors associated with overall state weakness, placing many states at risk for failure.[66]

African countries with critical ratings on the Failed States Index include some of the

highest scores in the rating areas that align to ethnicity and related poor governance:

group grievance, delegitimization of the state, human rights, and factionalized elites.[67]

In addition, the Fund for Peace[68] has identified several indicators of failed or failing

states, many that directly link to ethnicity. While this list is neither exclusive nor

exhaustive, it depicts the interlinkage of factors of instability that align with the mounting

challenges of ethnicity. Demographic pressures result from group settlement patterns

that affect the freedom to participate in common forms of economic productivity, travel,

and social interaction. This extends to group settlement patterns and border disputes

regarding land ownership, as shown by the Rwandan civil discord.[69]

Given the prevailing treatment of underprivileged ethnic groups in Nigeria, for

example, their history shows a legacy of injustices—violence, repression, hate

mongering, political rhetoric, that have inflamed "vengeance-seeking group grievance"

by marginalized ethnic groups within a region or state, some dating back to colonial

times. Without the power or institutional government backing to make a stand or have a

voice, some ethnic groups are relegated to an existence of exclusion from societal

standards merely due to who they are, or who they are not. They have diminished

opportunities in education, jobs, and economic status that, in turn, reduces them to

poverty, with limited education levels and advanced infant mortality rates in the absence

of equitable distribution or availability of essential public services.[70]

The continuing cycle of "endemic corruption" by ruling elites perpetuates the

deterioration of the marginalized ethnic groups, while bolstering their resentment and

"communal nationalism." The state then becomes increasingly criminalized and illegitimate, when the ruling elites continue to resist "transparency, accountability and political representation" to the public. The people must fend for themselves, while government agencies cater to the powerful elite.[71] In sum, the social situation deteriorates in every regard with abuses of legal, political and social rights that include loss of basic state functions and necessary public services. Lack of local, state and national security provided for the empowered elite, contested and corrupt elections, demonstrations and uprisings, and state resistance movements, and increasing violence is propagated by the rise of factionalized elites. The victims of the state deterioration are often targeted ethnic groups, doing nothing more than taking a stand for their equitable rights.[72]

In most cases of political instability in Africa, it is evident that a major problem is lacking leadership. Africa has seen its "freedom heroes" become dictators, using political rhetoric to support "ethnic cleansing" and plunder of natural resources, while politics of exclusion and deprivation influence the balance of power to dominate the state. Most African countries still bear scars from historical injustices and oppressive policies and organizations that conveyed to post-colonial leadership. This informs the weak institutions of the state, flawed legislative systems and constant struggles for political power to the detriment of many African nations.[73] These conditions, in turn, enable the eruption of ethnic conflict within the contested political and civil affairs of the states.

What conditions must exist to allow a state to be plagued with ethnic conflict? One prerequisite for the emergence of the security dilemma of ethnic conflict is the

collapse or severe weakening of a state. A 1993 study by Posen argued that in states, "there will be competition for the key to security-power. The competition will often continue to a point at which the competing entities have amassed more power than needed for security. The consequence of that is they begin to threaten others."[74] From several studies conducted in the 1990's on the subject of violent ethnic conflict, varying schools of thought emerged about ethnicity. A study in 1994 concluded that the dynamics and scale of ethnic violence varies by region. That study also found that ethnic conflict is a "manifestation of the enduring tension between states" that want to consolidate their power and ethnic groups that want to defend and promote their collective identity and interests.[75]

Another perspective from 1996 argues that ethnic conflict is driven by "mass ethnic hostility, outbidding by aggressive political elites, and a security dilemma", while others argue that, the study of ethnic violence requires consideration of deeper cultural factors that must be examined case-by-case.[76] The final published theory on this matter argues that inter-ethnic conflict is traceable to the emergence of a security dilemma. Overall, no academic consensus exists on the cause of ethnic conflicts, with no single answer to resolve ethnic confrontations yet identified or recognized.[77] However, many scholars have recognized ethnicity as a major cause of political instability, chaos and bloodshed in the continent.[78] Logic indicates that, given the various actors, locations, ethnicities, political factions and governance, each situation is unique and requires a case-by-case consideration and analysis. The myriad of weaknesses in African states are the same obstacles that limit economic and political development in Africa. These

weaknesses also allow ethnic conflicts to surface. In theory, "the existence of a

government can adjudicate disputes and assure security for all citizens."[79]

The politically incapacitated nature of post-colonial African states is characterized

by a "deficit in the institutional strength necessary to overcome ethnic division." [80] They

lack support and legitimacy within their population and within the international

community. Given the compounded issues prevalent in African societies, it is simply too

difficult to "disentangle the inherently weak nature of African states from the outbreak of

ethnic conflict." [81] It makes sense that attributes of weak states not only fail to prevent

ethnic conflict, but they also contribute to outbreaks of ethnic violence. As long as

failing states remain, there will be limited success in this area as well as continued

ethnic issues.

<u>Addressing Ethnicity in U.S. Policy</u>

As documented by President Obama in his 2010 National Security Strategy: as a

nation of mixed races, regions, faiths and cultures, America will persist in promoting

peace among different peoples and believes that democracy and individual

empowerment need not come at the expense of cherished identities.[82] The U.S. foreign

policy includes its enduring national interests that foster security, economic prosperity,

peace and opportunity, cooperation to meet global challenges, and respect for universal

values—including an improved quality of life for us and our allies and partners.[83] Africa

is on that list. U.S. policy is to link defense, diplomacy and development in support of

security and stability in Africa.[84] The U.S. "embraces effective partnerships" in Africa,

and supports the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union in humanitarian

and peace-keeping and capacity-building in the continent. All of these efforts serve to

bolster stability and "facilitate resolutions to the political tensions that underlie conflicts."[85]

To that end, the United States Africa Command, AFRICOM, is a tool to help achieve U.S. national interests in Africa by supporting security, capacity building, and stability in Africa. AFRICOM does not create policy, but rather supports U.S. policy decisions in coordination with the State Department, the U.S. embassies in Africa, and other U.S. government agencies. Its purpose is to protect American lives and promote American interests, which include a stable and prosperous Africa.[86] While Africa's security challenges include violence, theft of natural resources, lack of regional governance and ethnic tensions, the focus of AFRICOM is on capacity building with African militaries and with African regional organizations.[87] AFRICOM approaches African problems from an African perspective,[88] with consideration to the region's unique political, cultural and demographic characteristics.

AFRICOM focuses its efforts on supporting measurable progress by African states in building capable and professional militaries that are subordinate to civilian authority, respect human rights, and adhere to the rule of law. This, in turn, contributes to increased security and stability in Africa. The programs and activities of the command are in direct support of advancing and protecting U.S. interests in Africa. At the same time, they provide an opportunity for African states and regional organizations to promote democracy, expand development, provide for their common defense, and better serve their people.[89] The conflict, civil unrest, and governance of Africa all affect U.S. interests and strategy for Africa. AFRICOM is assisting African nations to build the capacity to address emerging security issues, so African nations can solve African

problems before they erupt into regional or international catastrophes.[90] Africans will

lead African efforts to address their challenges. Notably, the United States foreign

policy is not to influence relations between states but to affect events within them.[91]

Ethnicity in Africa is not a U.S. policy matter. National Security Presidential

Directive 50 (NSPD-50), the U.S. Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, addresses the U.S.

policy on Africa.[92] In addition, the NSS adequately addresses all matters relative to our

relationships, support and partnerships with African countries. The core issue is how to

enlist the respective state governments to recognize and improve the prevailing,

unsuccessful and deep-rooted challenges in Africa that exclude or marginalize their

collective citizens. The U.S. and its roles and missions in Africa support proactive

partnerships and programs, although the humanitarian assistance provided to the

continent is somewhat of a reactive response. Africa is fraught with serious

humanitarian crises that for all the afore-mentioned reasons foster instability. Frankly,

the U.S. does not have the answers for Africa. However, the achievement of U.S.

interests will help alleviate some of the overarching symptoms of the core problems

affecting Africa.

Having analyzed the role of ethnicity and instability on the continent, two things

become clear: 1) any efforts to manage instability without accounting for ethnicity issues

will likely fail; and, 2) ethnicity and its link to instability is contextually driven in that

ethnicity issues increase with an increase in the causes of instability. The implications

of this for the U.S. are that its ability to influence the root causes of ethnicity is limited.

Ethnicity often takes the form of political mobilization by political elites, who ultimately

stifle the opportunity for good governance and democratic institution building within the

African nations. This is when ethnicity poses the most serious threat to those societies and is most dangerous to peace and stability in the region. The context of the resulting security dilemma and the consequential grievances from politicized ethnicity requires a policy approach that favors institution building.

<u>Democratic Institution Building</u>

In the context of ethnicity in Africa, people want, rather need, safety and security and stability. Regardless of birthright, and as learned from Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs[93], all people want to be or feel included, or at least to have the capacity to be included. Democratic institution building may provide this. Ethnicity is not a problem to be fixed, but rather a social contract waiting to be executed. Under the notion of a social contract, individuals unite within a society by a process of mutual consent. They agree to abide by certain rules and to protect one another from violence, fraud, or negligence. It further implies that people give up sovereignty to a government or other authority in order to receive or maintain social order through the rule of law. It can also be an agreement by the governed on a set of rules under which they are governed.[94] In this regard, the United States is a unique example. Although it is often perceived as having some of the worst inter-ethnic tensions, the U.S. practices a remarkably stable form of civic nationalism[95] due to its accepted form of democratic governance. The far less stable situations in many African nations and the insidious forms of apartheid are examples of ethnic nationalism, not civic nationalism.

Democracy can support African countries where apartheid and ethnicity are not accepted standards. To create a sense of nationalism and African pride, Africans must lose the long-standing politics of former colonial masters and put themselves first. Democratic institution building is not an easy or hasty process. The process and

progress of building a democracy was rocky at best for the Unites States. The U.S.

gained its independence 235 years ago, while most African countries gained their

independence from colonial masters around 1960—only 50 years ago. Conflict is a

seemingly normal part of the maturing process in all relationships, including that of

stability- or democracy-building. This process appears similar to the Bruce Tuckman

'storming, norming, forming and performing' model for group developmental behavior.[96]

Perhaps that model could successfully apply to the formation of group identity between

ethnic groups and their inclusion in African governance. This possibility may merit

further study.

Democratic institution building is a key way to help alleviate the ethnicity

problems facing Africa, to mitigate the instability in Africa, and to give people a voice – a

way to be recognized and to be heard. The three core parts of democracy necessary

for institution building include: access to the system; accountability of leadership; and,

peaceful transfer of power.[97] These core pieces absent in the African form of

governance, are a recommended way to turn around the civil and civic unrest that is

prevalent in states across the Continent. Legitimacy in the process is the critical piece.

If people accept the government, it then becomes legitimate.[98]

In an institutional process, there is an expectation of sound leadership and good

governance. There is no zero sum mathematics of 'us' versus 'them', and there is

appropriate influence of the people, for the people. This process is evolutionary, as it

was in U.S. history. The U.S. Civil War helped change key issues that were in conflict,

politics and beliefs, that affected the balance of power within the states. Eventually and

after considering the alternatives, the citizens of the nation ultimately learned to put the

good of the nation first. Our civic nationalism is an evolutionary process that continues today.

Institution building includes peace and security, development, human rights, humanitarian affairs, and rule of law, all captured under the umbrella of democratic good governance.[99] Democracy requires access (a vote) and accountability (of leadership), democracy (good of the people, not some people) and rule of law (rule and order limits corruption). Access is having the right to have a vote and obtain citizenship. While citizenship does not entitle you to resources, it entitles you to enter the struggle for resources. In this sense, democracy is about expanding the opportunity for citizenship.[100]

Accountability includes the various institutions of government such as the police, military and the ministries. Including these organs of the state in this process should work to promote democracy. A common rule of law should be equitably employed by the state: with Ombudsmen and other independent judicial bodies to protect the citizens from the state and to prevent the repetition of corrupt practices that fuel unrest.[101] Democracy as a form of government also allows for the peaceful transfer of power from one administration to the other. State constitutions should stipulate term limits for the office of president or prime minister to alleviate the possibility of unilateral or authoritarian rule, as witnessed in balance of power conflicts this year in Egypt and Libya. With proper leadership and state governance, application of the rule of law and enforcement of constitutional rights for all citizens will eventually become the accepted norm.

When we observe political mobilization of ethnicity, we now know there is potential for incitement to conflict and a security dilemma. Democracy could flourish more easily when based upon issue politics, rather than the simple identity politics of politicized ethnicity.[102] The people determine the form of democracy, the social contract they are willing to accept to obtain what should be fundamental services--security, rule of law, and access. Democratic institution building serves to counteract the political mobilization of ethnicity as a form of toxic civic nationalism. It answers the question of balancing "ethnic consciousness and national patriotism". The access provided under democracy is a way to build and continue support for the social contract. People with a vote that counts begin to feel included and develop a sense of belonging—to the community or state. That is the baseline for the start of civic nationalism.

The institution building role that AFRICOM provides on the continent is key for the resolution of internal governance and security practices. As the numbers of police in Africa are insufficient for the populations, they rarely operate in rural areas. Accordingly, problems of ethnic-based recruitment limit constructive relations with the community.[103] Prevailing area ethnic groups dominate security services while criminal threats often emerge in ethnic groups "that have been marginalized in national politics and civil service."[104] Due to this ongoing ethnic complicity, the mission of AFRICOM remains vital to U.S. interests and the security and capacity building for Africa.

For all of the above reasons, using the diplomatic instrument of power is the recommended course of action to assist Africa with its prevailing governance and ethnicity challenges. Along with the work of AFRICOM to help alleviate the ethnic buildup of security forces, this formula is a good start to settle the power imbalances

within certain groups and against certain groups. Unfortunately, the influence of the United States in addressing the many critical African issues is limited by its foreign aid package to Africa, 80% of which is in the form of humanitarian assistance. Given pressing U.S. fiscal constraints, little additional aid money is available for political leverage to help the states that are faltering in their democratization efforts and balance of power issues.[105]

We must consider whether the U.S. interests and programs align with its national security strategy in support of institution building, or if it is more committed to providing humanitarian assistance for the people of Africa. To this end, the U.S. should review its assistance programs for Africa to see where it could be more responsive and proactive versus reactive, as with the humanitarian aid provided. While an adjustment in focus may be warranted, due to pressing fiscal constraints, it is not anticipated that the U.S. could provide any more financially to Africa without a corresponding offset—even to humanitarian aid. This would then require the potential reallocation of resources already applied to aid the continent.

The complexity of the problems in Africa are akin to those of 53 separate United States of Americas, all added together. In this regard too, Africa is unique. Ethnicity is pervasive in many of the core challenges affecting Africa. Therefore, ethnic challenges must be addressed to make progress with the others. Institution building is the likely answer to help correct many African social ills. These hard issues require that hard questions be asked and answered. Given the U.S. national interest for a safe and secure Africa, institution building should be the priority for its assistance to Africa. The U.S. focus is to help Africa with democratic institution building; we cannot guarantee

health or happiness, although that could be a collateral effect of the ensuing good governance and fulfillment of a social contract. Good governance is important, sometimes even vital, for all citizens. In the end, the U.S. must ask what effect we it is trying to achieve in relation to its national interests.

Ethnicity and governance are closely intertwined. Democracy is not a panacea for instability, but rather can be another catalyst for ethnicity-based conflict that flows from the zero sum nature of the political competition among groups. That is the central risk of this approach. Yet, democracy can also help diminish the causes of ethnic-based conflict, provided sound leadership is involved. Poorly institutionalized democracy is the challenge of most of Africa, which further compounds the difficulty of making progress on the balance of power and governance issues of the respective countries.[106]

In order for the 21st Century to be different for the continent, democracy building and institution building must have higher priority. The will of the people—with a voice that counts—matters; it must for effective democratic governance. Citizens want strong yet fair leadership that both acknowledges and represents its constituents. In a democracy, the representation and governance should be about and for the people—all the people. It is possible to support inclusiveness while maintaining ethnic and cultural differences—it happens in democracies around the world. Australia is a notable example; it ranks as one of the most stable states in the world.[107] Given the contextual nature of this problem, the U.S. must realize that the status of each African country warrants assessment on a case-by-case basis with regard to its politics and governance for its citizens. There are no cookie cutter solutions for ethnicity and governance

challenges across each of the 53 different African countries, each with differing geography, demographics, governance, politics and ethnicities.

While the challenges are many and the problems are large, the good news is that the United States is taking the right approach and doing what it should and can. The U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are working closely with African partners, the United Nations, and the African Union to create strategic effect, while its partner, AFRICOM, is succeeding in outreach, capacity building, professional military training, and humanitarian assistance for our African partners.

However, the Department of State (DOS) diplomatic means needed to address and support Africa in these matters is slow moving largely due to understaffing and fiscal realities of the State Department and the USAID development and training initiatives. That situation is being remedied with the proposed budget increases in the President's budget for State and USAID initiatives and personnel.[108] As the U.S. policy and foreign aid for Africa now stands, the U.S. may experience diminishing leverage with African countries with regard to sensitive matters such as democracy, human rights, and freedom of the press. The U.S. will need to focus its diplomatic efforts by engaging African government, civil society and business interests to support better governance, democracy and human rights.

Given these constraints, working with partners increases the effectiveness of the United States Government's whole-of-government approach to stability operations. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton confirmed that the U.S. cannot work to solve these issues alone—it will literally "take a village" and the focus of the respective African

governments and leaders, as well as an international joint effort, to make progress with respect to these fundamental ethnic disconnects in most of the African states and countries.[109] We need to apply the latest lessons learned to the most pressing problems, and we need to encourage shoulder-to-shoulder coordination and collaboration between African governments, Africa people and beneficiaries and partners in government and civil society and the private sector to address the issues one by one. With proper backing, acceptance and persistence and by taking risks, leveraging the capability of willing partners and focusing on impact, collective efforts to address the plethora of significant problems can make a real difference in Africa.[110] To this end, there is simply no substitute for experienced, competent leadership in a complex mission, such as this.[111]

Still, the U.S., along with the international community and the African Union must manage expectations regarding what is achievable in large-scale ethnicity matters by what courses of action over what time period for Africa. While hoping for a positive change in the situations, we must be realistic about the complex dynamics of the respective situations in the African states, including the possibility of prolonged defiance of recommended changes. Like the recently disputed elections in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, it is likely that there will be similarly disputed, if not violent, elections elsewhere in Africa.[112]

The much bigger question is what steps will the African countries and their governments, and the African Union and its partners take to aid the African people? "Effective conflict prevention and transformation require greater coherence among security, governance, and development policies and enhanced coordination among

governmental agencies and between those agencies and local, regional, and international partners."[113] As a whole, Africans have the drive and initiative to take charge of their own security; more likely than not, they merely lack the means.

Conclusion

Ethnicity contributes to and interconnects with many causes of instability in Africa, including colonial legacy, poverty, political disputes, resources control, and poor governance. The colonial legacy of Sub-Saharan Africa feeds the class distinctions and elite's abuses of ethnicity to support the balances of power, corruption and hegemony of resources. All provide for a foundation of poor governance. To turn the situation around, the critical links are that of leadership, good governance, and democratic institution building. With appropriate and continued assistance from the U.S., allies and international partners, Africa can make the wholesale transition to good governance in support of its people for the long term. Given the borderline stability status of the majority of African states, and some of the factors that support or increase stability, and the surge in election uprisings and unrest in several countries in the past year, including Nigerian and Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, and Egypt, good governance is a critical indicator of stability. Good governance implies that the state is taking care of its citizens across ethnic, economic and age groups. [114]

The process of establishing or in some cases strengthening democratic institutions in the diverse societies of Africa is a significant challenge that will require focused and fundamentally African processes. In Nigeria, institution building is being revitalized with newly elected president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, who cited anti-corruption, power and electoral reform as the focus points of his administration.[115] Across the continent there is much work to do on this front, with the lion's share of it

required by Africans for Africa. Ethnicity and its link within African society, as represented herein, is an African problem. Africans must take the lead on determining African solutions to this African problem. The challenges of ethnicity are a complex issue with no one solution. These challenges require concentrated efforts by African leaders to resolve. To understand the complex nature of conflicts in Africa is a key element of facilitating improvements.[116] Conflicts cannot be resolved unless their root causes are addressed; therefore, ethnicity concerns must be addressed one by one.[117]

The possibilities of institution building provide for the needed access to diminish the effect of politicized ethnicity; the accountability of corrupt or inept leaders; and, the .peaceful transfer of power. These long-term issues will not be resolved in short order, especially since they have been operational on a large scale for fifty years. Many forces and factions are competing for power and legitimacy, often at odds to what one would hope to find in a democracy.[118] Outside influence is called for to help tip the scales back to equal. While that assessment and analysis process is underway, the institution building can commence. Concerted and persistent efforts on all democracy fronts are will make a difference. The process needs to be institutionalized and protected and enforced to become fair and open. State constitutions must reflect impartial representation, and the rule of law must be enforced to reduce the pervasive corruption that simply does not engage well with democracy.

There is no intent to have a US-led coalition effort to help fix the social ills in Africa; Africa has the capability to do so. The problem is not ours to solve, nor is the bill ours to pay. The U.S. is focusing the right resources in DOS and AFRICOM to aid institution building that includes good governance, security and capacity building. Of

course, the U.S. will continue to provide humanitarian assistance, because of its commitment to helping the people of Africa. Africans need the capacity to help themselves flourish as people, as countries, and as a continent. Good social order, security, and stability are U.S. national interests that are in the best interest of all nations.

Key states like Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, and Nigeria in particular are experiencing democratic regression by failing to address fundamental problems of unrest resulting from lack of electoral reform, deficient infrastructure investment, lagging economic growth, unemployment and poverty. Ethnicity serves to exacerbate the effects of these shortcomings and thereby speeds up democratic regression. Unfortunately, as democratization fails to progress, human rights will suffer.[119] The policy goals of the United States, as outlined in the National Security Strategy, are well intended, but we may have to consider that our programs may be out of balance, given the current state of Africa and its interests.

The bottom line is that these multi-layered issues, as well as their mitigation, improvement, or resolution, rest with Africa. The African Union has it right: there must be African solutions to African problems. We agree. The U.S. diplomacy efforts along with those of USAID can help the problems of Africa, including ethnicity, to a point—with humanitarian assistance and projects; our military security training and capacity building can help to a point. After all, the United States is also resource-constrained and cannot be everything to everybody, not even to ourselves. The best resources to help address the ethnic conflicts are the people of Africa. Their capability is waiting to be fully realized. The U.S. role is to help them help themselves.

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